UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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REDUCTION IN FALL DUCK FLIGHTS FORECAST BY INTERIOR DEPARTMENT

North America's fall flights of major game ducks may be less than in

1966, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall said today.

The announcement was based on reports from Interior's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, which found that a late season and deteriorating water conditions created a poor nesting situation on the northern prairie breeding grounds.

John S. Gottschalk, Bureau Director, said rapidly disappearing water in July over much of the prairie duck nesting grounds has dried up earlier expectations of a larger duck flight than in 1966.

"Late reports from field biologists indicate poor nesting success as a result of spring storms that made this the latest season on record, followed by drouth conditions over widespread prairie nesting areas."

Gottschalk said.

"The excellent habitat of May deteriorated rapidly in late June and July, and hopes for high renesting production vanished with the water."

An earlier report from Interior indicated that breeding populations, particularly of mallards as the country's most important wild duck, were relatively unchanged. Aerial surveys found that many nesting mallards had shifted to more northern areas and that there was a satisfactory increase in the breeding population.

However, due to delayed nesting and rapid drop in water levels, production of mallards is expected to be below that of last year. The adverse conditions also affect pintail, blue-winged teal, and canvasback ducks.

"Prospects for the fall flight of canvasbacks are particularly disheart-ening," Director Gottschalk said. "The breeding population of canvasbacks last spring was at the lowest point since 1962. Flights of redheads are expected to show little change from 1966, partly due to an increase in the breeding population."

"Geese are an optimistic note at this point," Gottschalk added.
"Except for a few flocks, goose flights this fall should be equal to the good flights of 1966 and some are expected to be better."